97-84038-11

Wanamaker, John

Address made...on the occasion of the visit of...

[Philadelphia]

[1912]

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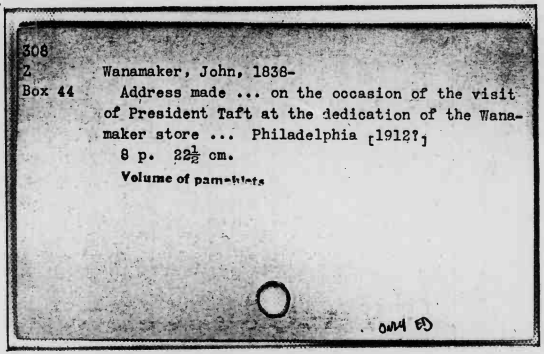
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Box 44
Wanamaker, John, 1838-
Address made ... on the occasion of the visit of President Taft at the dedication of the Wanamaker store ... Philadelphia [1912?]
8 p. 22½ cm.
Volume of pamphlets
OVM ED

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TECHNICAL MICROFORM DATA

FILM SIZE: 35 mm REDUCTION RATIO: 12:1 IMAGE PLACEMENT: IA (IIA) IB IIB

DATE FILMED: 3-4-97 INITIALS: RB

TRACKING # : 20951

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DEC 1 1911

Address Made by Honorable John Wanamaker

On the Occasion of the Visit of

President Taft

at the

Dedication of the Wanamaker Store

Sent out with the compliments of George H. Paine, Philadelphia, Pa.

MR. WANAMAKER'S ADDRESS

His honor who presides here to-day in his official capacity is also here as Rudolph Blankenburg, an old merchant of Philadelphia and my personal friend of upward of thirty years. I beg you to thank him for yourselves, as I have already thanked him for his presence and interest in this occasion.

The President of the United States, without a single word of conference from first to last with me personally on the subject of his visit to-day, in the greatness of his heart signalizes our friendship of twenty years and adds to the importance of this occasion by his presence here. He bestows upon merchants and business men the country over the highest and most valued compliments of the season in the magnificence of his kingly courtesy to business endeavor. His coming stopped off all business here last night that this occasion might have its place apart from traffic and be made a Presidential Holiday for over 6000 assistants.

The City of Philadelphia, through the officials of the municipality; the members of the Select and Common Councils, the Governor of our Commonwealth and members of the Legislature and tens of thousands of citizens of Philadelphia here assembled, thank you, Mr. President, for conferring upon us all the transcending honor of your distinguished consideration. The members of the Diplomatic Corps, the members of the Presidential Cabinet, United States Senators and Representatives, the special trainload of distinguished merchants and manufacturers from Chicago, and the many leading business men of New York, the publishers and members of the press, unite with his Excellency, the President of the United States, in nationalizing to some degree an event pregnant with interest at this paritcular moment to the business and educational fraternities of America.

Primarily, the event that calls us together centers upon a building, and that building owes its existence to a series of circumstances that made it necessary. The old conditions and the new ideas that produced it justify this unusual and august celebration.

There are those who cannot understand that buildings are often much more than four walls and a roof. They cannot read the poetry of its exterior or the ideality of its interior. They miss its expression of unity and the enthronement of a purpose.

The great buildings of the world are wonderfully interesting. They mark its history. There are other temples, however, than cathedrals and theaters.

The Coliseum at Rome, from first to last, with its seating capacity of 100,000, was but an empty shell, so far as benefiting the world was concerned.

Not so Peter Cooper's Institute Building, in New York; the Williamson Free Schools of Mechanical Trades, near Media, Pa.; the Girard College, in Philadelphia; the Carnegie Institute of Arts and Sciences, in Pittsburgh; all of these, with others like them in the various cities of America, mean more than a thousand Coliseums of empty shells. The world has received a blessing from these three examples of beneficence of the ancient merchants and the wise old ironmaster still living. What these men have wrought through buildings is a part of the history of the age in which they lived.

The architect of this building in which we are assembled will certify that this building, for its purpose, has no equal in the mercantile world. As a matter of fact, it is not a speculative building built for investment, but the creation of its owner for the specific business already here, which has developed slowly and surely in the course of half a century. It challenges its right to be here as an historic lodestar and to remain here because of the necessity that produced it.

It is but one of many fine mercantile buildings in the land, but it is the one building that embodies the system of business that originated and developed here, and which has in some degree made possible the success of numberless enterprises that afterward adopted its systems in part or as a whole. At the time the New Kind of Business was instituted here there was no other store in America organized upon the same basis.

Abraham Lincoln said at Gettysburg, "The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here."

Would that it were possible that the world might hear and remember for its own good use the truth that is so plainly expounded by this motherhouse of business in its outspoken, uncopyrighted speech of everyday work.

The far-seeing and wise President of the United States, the ruler and regulator, not of one section nor of one class of his people, a student of law and economics, as well as of the arts and sciences, with malice toward none and fairness, justice and charity for all, comprehends the situation of business affairs in our country in its units as well as in its syndicates, after giving much time and thought to the arguments for and the demands of capital seeking to be incorporated under new conditions and for new interpretations of existing laws, he turns away to-day to the humbler classes of his business people with unsyndicated capital, to touch elbows with them, to study the merits of another side of business uncapitalized in corporate ways, save for the sole purpose of obtaining perpetuity to employments and investments without interruption. He comes to take a leaf out of what an experience of fifty years represents; and it is an honor to Philadelphia to have him dedicate a building that hundreds of thousands of its citizens have an interest in because of what it has demonstrated to be for the public good.

There is something here, Mr. President, out of the common that may fairly claim the consideration of the chief executive of a nation that stands first among the business nations of the world.

If I think rightly, you, sir, have had in your short administration more business questions to consider than any other President since George Washington filled the chair.

This historic city was at one time in its past famous for its legal schools, later for its medical schools.

I ask you, sir, to forget the mere transactions of trade that occur within these walls and to regard your visit here to-day to

A SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

that to some degree has revolutionized commerce and has yet its greatest work to do. Like Paul Jones, we are saying what he said when commanded by a great English admiral to surrender his ship:

"I HAVE JUST BEGUN TO FIGHT."

What the old Quaker Williamson School does for mechanics in its education by something similar to the old apprenticeship system, this school of business does for the rising generation, who are being trained to a new order of methods and measures of commercial life.

It teaches men and women who have joined its classes to know geography, not alone to tell capitals of States and boundaries of rivers and lakes, but where and how the best products of the world are made, and to bring about reciprocity so that we can make exchanges of American manufactured goods for them. By scientific analysis and laboratory work to label articles what they really are. To train men and women to earn better wages by developing intelligence that will make them love to be in the ranks of labor and employments that accord them honorable recognition in the world, puts every work upon a basis of rising in the world through promotions solely upon a civil service competition along lines less theoretical than practical.

Mr. President, honest, hearty, fairly paid labor is better than fleets of war vessels to conserve the peace and happiness of any country. The idler and the idiot of any country gravitate to a place beside each other in the lowest rank of humanity, and neither of them adds to the real wealth and prosperity of a country. An uninvested talent is no good to a man nor to a community, and it is equally true that the more a man or a people can do the more it is possible for them to do.

From out of this new school which you have in your great wisdom come to crown with your dedication for the good of the general public, there will ever go forth the proclamation of unpatented opportunities, free to all people, whereby we may pull together for a mightier America, starting forward unhampered on a new march of victory over all obstacles.

The mercantile operations here for fifty years present, in a simple and distinct way, the growth and the advantages of business enterprises conducted without the possibility of outside domination, if strictly regulated upon the lines of voluntary and not forced consolidations or combinations, and if guided solely by co-operation of labor and carried on with the utmost freedom of competition. The bulk of business conducted in this country to-day by other than shareholders' capital represents the safest, healthiest and most steady prosperity that can be obtained by any country. It is the work, work, work of active men in contra-distinction to the idle men who are busy only as investors. It is that kind of labor that produces wealth and most truly safeguards and conserves the country's prosperity. I am not reflecting upon the many honorable and worthy men whose invested money makes possible the necessary extensions of great enterprises to meet the growth of the country, but I am pointing to the fact of the share-making schemes that do not build or add to actual values, but which require profits of so much more, thereby compelling higher prices of a thousand things, such as shoes, clothing, linen and other necessaries of life and comfort that could otherwise be sold for less.

A competitive and co-operative business is the antithesis of such trusts as are permitted to monopolize business.

This competitive and co-operating organization has been the means of mutiplying instead of reducing to the public the facilities of business and excellence of service. Witnesses by the thousands will come into court and to the witness stand whenever called to testify to this fact. This may be put down as a triumph of free and competitive labor apart from the trust methods.

The revolution that began here by creating large outlets for merchandise compelled manufacturers at that time to bring their goods to consumers without the intervention of middlemen, and this greatly reduced prices by increased sales and therefore increased productions—another triumph for labor.

The possible economies of co-operation of merchandise, as well as the co-operation in management of people, with the mighty regulator of a city full of competitors, cannot but be of vast benefit to the people when compared to the trust-bound operations governed by monopolistic organizations. That the attrition of competition produces an education of higher development of the faculties of forceful young men may well be believed, as proved by the independent and progressive competitive businesses planted throughout this and other countries.

This is a triumph of education and labor.

The best prosperity of America is the sight of active smokestacks in operation on every hillside and the music of the hum and hammers of workshops in every valley and the singing of looms and lathes in its cities and towns, and this happy condition, largely denied to us at present, will come again as soon as men are no longer

crazed by the stories of quick-to-get-rich ways and caught away from honest and steady labor to leave homes and families for the Stock Exchange and alluring schemes that offer the impossible things of wealth without labor.

Mr. President, the house you dedicate to-day stands, first of all,

—for the Labor that created it.

—for full and plenty Labor as the basis of property and prosperity.

—for Free Labor for all men who are willing to work.

—for Labor doubled in value to the world by education and enthusiasm of application—

This organization has stood for nearly twenty years for the education of its young people as a part of the business compact and for the better future of all.

Mr. President, this nation thanks Mr. Roosevelt for helping to elect you President—the man he well knew.

The people East and West and North and South believe in you. They believe you will not allow any portion of this vast nation to be injured for the benefit of another part, if in your power to prevent it. Therefore, I venture upon this auspicious occasion, with this object lesson in front of you, to ask your careful study with the conditions of other businesses such as those which are being proved up before your eyes, where you have the demonstration of existing subsidiary corporations, hidden rebates, monopolies of money supplies, large damage accounts masked upon books of record, if public report is to be believed, and combinations plainly against existing laws, unnecessarily advancing rates and raising the costs of living and checking improvements that tend to increase employment.

The regular businesses of the old-fashioned type, where labor is the essence of prosperity founded upon sound economic principles, such businesses as are constructive and co-operative, are suffering. When the shadows of distrust are removed and the labor of many hands is producing something wanted, money, contentment and easier living will return to all people.

The brakes of constitutional expediency are slowly bringing the train of expansion to a standstill. The long temporizing with business standards and the mathematical and miscroscopic surveys of existing laws to find ways to either defend or defeat their operation are hurtful to good times in the highest degree. For this to exist, when no failure of crops and no actual storm signals of panic appear in the business sky, settles a great hardship upon millions of innocent people whose businesses are tied hand and foot.

Every factor essential to a great forward industrial movement is at this time present save one.

The uncertainty that came in eighteen months ago is still here. It sat down in almost every counting room and office. It turned

confidence out of doors. Large and safe movements of big constructive business have halted. Such business still hesitates and will hesitate until the potential forces stop that are endeavoring to substitute a new faith and practice of business in place of the tried principles. While the clamor goes on it breaks the spirit and discourages the honest small unincorporated works of commercial operations that have for so long been our bulwark. To attempt to tire these good people out by temporizing, when they have suffered long and much, is almost a crime. I appeal to you, Mr. President, to stand by the old, well-tried principles that are right and eternal, with all your might and power, and let us regain and retain our old prosperities.

There is a widespread belief that all this country needs to assure its progress is a simple and definite code of constitutional business justice and morality. It is, I believe, an incontrovertible truth that the future power, stability and reputation of our country can only be measured by wealth and high character combined. Wealth alone is not enough; honest industry and persistent labor must also play a large part in the future as in the way-back past. Wealth can no more be created safely and permanently held by the mere shuffling of securities than character can be created by shuffling cards.

In actuality, with high taxations, advanced prices of almost everything, the last three years have been in the main to the professional people, business people and all other people outside of the trusts, empty bottles with large labels of hope and expectation upon each side of them; and this despite the richness and abundance of the soil, absence of floods and disasters, splendid health of the people. The cause is easy to find, and once removed, we shall have the greatest prosperity of any nation under the sun.

Mr. President, if mercantile business is only buying and selling, it is a very small affair and narrowing to those engaged in it. The blacksmith and the engine builder, who produce something the world wants, are more worthy of honor.

If mercantile business disfranchises a man from being a Christian, woe unto the nations of the earth whose populations are in largest degree other than clergymen, lawyers, doctors and men of the professions! It has never been true that all skaters were navigators like Peary.

The greatest of all teachers said: "Callest thou me good? There is none good but God." And therefore we may not look to perfection in any calling, but we surely and steadfastly may go on toward it, and whatever comes, go on—nulla dies sine linea—no day without a line, and the line in my copy book that I mean to write every day is for a commerce worldwide, broad-minded and patriotic, to harmonize all nations and such service as will help to their prosperity.

I fixed for myself for this day's duty to avoid in this address everything personal to myself. I feel, however, that I might be

forgiven, if at this, the only business dedication service I have had in my life, to say some things as a merchant and citizen that long experience and observation have taught me and that I believe may be useful to others than myself.

At this particular time when the whole world of American business is contrasting and standing still in amazement at the vast profits of unequaled or inoperative laws of control, at the vast profits of assembled syndicating and naturally lamenting the small returns of regular unsyndicated business and the difficulties of making living ends meet with the prevailing high prices, there must be some way to at least begin to get out of the quagmire in which general prosperity is for the time being limp and lame. It will not smother itself into ashes by shutting our eyes to it. Even a chattering sparrow has as many wings as yonder eagle. Each individual must by unselfish thought and earnest speech do his part to relieve the situation.

If from this school of progress, where 40,000 people are, we could speak in thunder tones to the whole people, I appeal for the recall, for the recall of old-fashioned truth-telling in public print, editorially, locally and advertisingly, because the constant and almost unconscious filtration of poison into the body politic and physical is a blood poisoning that is at least devitalizing to life.

For the recall of respect for law and for its prompt and summary administration for poor and rich alike, like unto such practice as exists in the British nation.

For the recall to decent respect for rulers called and elected to rule by the voice of the people, which is the voice of God.

For the recall to common sense of the learned and unlearned noisy agitators, who cloud the sky with vagaries and visions and keep the torchlight to the scaffoldings of builders of prosperity.

Mr. President, I pass on to you the key to this solid, simple, strong, straightforward building, with its foundation of business ethics, roof of hope and wide-open doors of four-sided opportunity. You are the commander of the army and navy of the United States. You are also the head of not only the administrative work of the nation, but you are also the head of the business world, that with your wisdom you may unlock any good that there is here in any way you see fit for the general good of mankind.

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